



# Our Atlantic Steamship Service.

(SECOND ARTICLE.)

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## OUR ATLANTIC STEAMSHIP SERVICE.

### II.

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The article on the proposed fast steamship service between Canada and Great Britain which appeared in *QUEEN'S QUARTERLY* for October last, has led to so much comment that I am impelled to submit some further observations on the subject.

There is a common feeling that we should take every means in our power to improve the communication with the British Islands. *First*, in order that the products which we raise may be carried to their best market at the lowest cost and in the best condition. *Secondly*, that passengers and mails may be conveyed across the ocean as speedily and as safely as possible. *Thirdly* and generally, that the closest intercourse may be permanently established between Her Majesty's subjects, on both sides of the Atlantic.

In the article referred to I endeavoured to take a dispassionate view of the whole circumstances of the case, with the sincere desire to arrive at sound conclusions. Soon after the publication of the paper I left for England, and have only recently returned. Since my arrival in Canada, I have had my attention directed to extracts from the public press, in which I am charged with "casting aspersions on our noble river," with "bucking the scheme," with "want of patriotism," with "decrying the St. Lawrence" and such like offences.

In a project of this character, all sensible men must admit that the fullest investigation is desirable; that it should be examined from every side, so that no narrow or defective view be taken; and that, before the country is bound to pay an enormous subsidy, it be first established, that the expenditure has been wisely determined. Every Canadian must acknowledge the necessity of proceeding with deliberation, so that no false step shall be taken and no error committed. The question is of national importance. It is not simply a consideration, whether the establishment of heavily subsidized steamships will benefit

this or that city, or this or that Province, but the extent to which it will be advantageous to the whole community. Therefore the broadest view should be taken of the subject, and the project considered in its most comprehensive aspect. I am sure that we all desire that Canada should not be committed to an expenditure to result in disappointment and loss, nor that we should be restrained by niggardly economy, seriously to retard our national advancement; nor on the other hand that we should engage in a policy of inaction to end in loss to the commonweal.

I conceive that the duty rests on each person who has reflected upon the subject to express his views. The views of any particular individual are but a unit in the general mass of public opinion, "constituting" as Herbert Spencer says "with other such units the general power which works out social changes." In this aspect any man may properly give full utterance to his innermost convictions, leaving them to produce what effect they may.

In this spirit, in my first communication I submitted the essential facts bearing on this question, and drew the conclusions to which these facts logically led. I conceive that no fault can be found with this course; rather it should be accounted a title to public confidence when a man speaks what he considers to be the truth; the more especially when he aims at averting public evil or attaining public good.

It appears to me that the time has arrived when the Canadian people may profit by the experience which has been gained in subsidizing public undertakings. Many may remember cases when subsidies have been granted to enterprises that have been found impossible of successful accomplishment. The result has been grievous loss and disappointment and sometimes ruin to innocent investors, with much discredit to Canada. As more directly connected with the present question, I may refer to the experience gained in the history of Canadian mail steamships, though I do not wish to recall the series of disasters which at one time befell the Allan Line, when eight passenger ships were lost in eight years, or the shipwrecks and losses sustained by the Dominion and Beaver lines. I have been called to account by the press of Quebec for mentioning that the navigation

of the St. Lawrence offers many dangers to the rapid steaming of vessels of heavy tonnage. Some writers state that my knowledge of the navigation is very limited, and my opinion respecting it not worth much. As they will possibly recognize a Quebec authority as more competent to speak on this point, I would refer them to the work of Mr. Henry Fry, published so recently as 1896. This work entitled *The History of North Atlantic Steam Navigation* has been carefully prepared by one of the most respected residents of Quebec, long familiar with every circumstance connected with the St. Lawrence Route. In this volume will be found a record of details fully supporting all I have stated respecting the difficulties in the way of fast steaming, and the dire consequences to which these difficulties have already too frequently led, even in the case of comparatively slow steamships (see pages 144-5, and 201-6).

Among other things stated by Mr. Fry is that the distressing losses of life and property were not due to any want of skill or experience on the part of the owners or captains. He however expresses the opinion that the Government was not blameless in exacting speed, in the face of the serious obstacles which were presented to rapid steaming, and in imposing heavy penalties for non-punctuality in the delivery of the mails within the periods stipulated by contract.

Obviously no one wishes to see similar losses repeated, and it is to prevent them being repeated, possibly in an aggravated form, that words of caution are now being used. It matters little who proclaims the necessity of caution. There are occasions when by the voice of warning, the humblest individual may be instrumental in obviating the gravest calamities. Are we not told that Rome was saved by the cackling of a goose?

In my previous paper I submitted that the evidence of facts does not warrant the belief that steamships can always run with safety at great speed on considerable portions of the St. Lawrence route, and that this is especially the case in the approaches to the straits of Belle Isle. Frequently the navigation is beset with ice-bergs for hundreds of miles; moreover when within the straits the course of ships is confined between lines of rocky coast on both sides, while irregular currents and dense fogs frequently prevail.

In some newspapers it is stated that witnesses of marine experience, whose opinion is worth more than mine, have declared that the navigation of the St. Lawrence is safe for the largest and fastest steamers. I am disposed to agree with this testimony, with the proviso, whatever it may be worth, that the navigation is safe for fast steamers, provided they move as slowly as the occasion demands. Other statements have appeared in the press to the effect that there has been very little delay experienced for several years back by certain steamships which have made the passage by the route in question. The statement may be quite true; but it is equally true that other steamships and possibly the same steamships at other times have been seriously delayed. Moreover, we must not put out of view that all such steamships have been comparatively slow vessels. We are now considering the employment of steamships of much greater speed than any hitherto in use, and obviously the reduction from 20 knots to what would be regarded as a safe speed of say 6 or 8 knots for a slow vessel would, certainly, by comparison be counted as much greater delay. Be this as it may, it is to be feared that unless human nature greatly changes, there will be found among the commanders of fast steamships those who would, in order to make speedy passages, be tempted to drive ahead, trusting to the chance of getting through without mishap.

With respect to all that has appeared in the press on this subject, I can only remark that I have consulted many experienced men, the commanders of mail steamships and others, and I have read everything published which I have been able to obtain, but I have seen nothing not in accord with the facts I have submitted. I will add that no one would more truly rejoice than myself if the investigation of the facts led to different conclusions. I repeat the main conclusions, to which I conceive these irresistibly lead.

(1.) That our great waterway, the St. Lawrence, will always be employed to the greatest advantage in the conveyance of staple products, and all ordinary cargo merchandise, at the lowest possible rates; and that to secure low rates the products must be carried on steamships of moderate speed. (2.) That any attempt to establish on the St. Lawrence route, now followed, a line of

trans-Atlantic steamships to rival those running to and from New York, must result in disappointment. (3.) That if we desire to establish such a fast line successfully, the steamships must arrive at and take their departure from one of our Atlantic seaports.

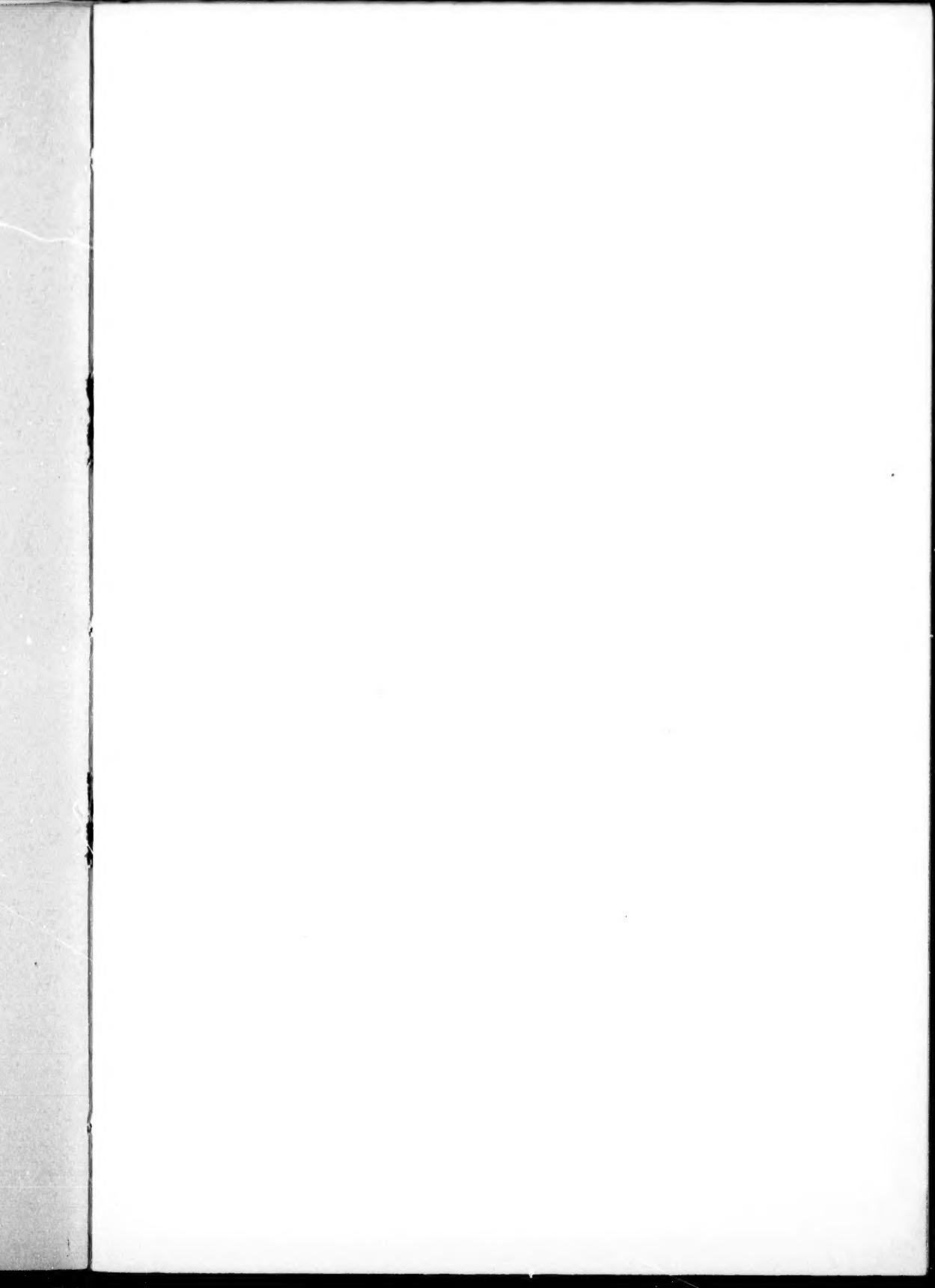
I referred to the advantages and disadvantages of several ocean ports in the Maritime Provinces, and mentioned those which seemed to be entitled to the preference; but the gravamen of my offence is in having pointed out as mildly as possible that steamships could not run regularly at great speed with ordinary safety between Montreal or Quebec and the United Kingdom, by the ordinary route followed.

The facts which led to these conclusions, came under the head of climatic and geographical difficulties, but there are other considerations of a different character, which bear on the question. If the best authorities connected with steam transportation be consulted, they will state that if a subsidized line by the St. Lawrence is to carry freight in sufficient quantity, it should terminate at Montreal. If however the ships be designed for speed, and to carry little or no freight, in that case Quebec should have the preference. This is the opinion of the president of the Canadian Pacific Railway. Judging from his public utterances I have reason to believe the manager of the Grand Trunk Railway is of the same opinion, and I do not doubt all competent authorities will be found to hold similar views. Sir William Van Horne has clearly pointed out that it is purely a matter of profit or loss. In the case of steamships carrying a considerable quantity of freight, he says the voyage should be extended as far as possible towards the interior. The same rule does not prevail in the case of steamships carrying only or chiefly passengers, and in that as in all cases the character of the traffic determines the question. In a letter from Sir William to Mr. Garneau, published in the *Quebec Chronicle* of Nov. 11th, 1896, he points out that there would be a large profit in bringing ships laden with freight to Montreal, and a large loss in bringing them beyond Quebec if they have no freight.

The opinion of transportation authorities has an important bearing on the selection of a terminal port for a Canadian

line of fast steamships. I greatly fear that the views I expressed on this point six months ago, were somewhat in advance of the time, and that I have in consequence been misunderstood. I took it as an accepted principle that freight and passenger traffic should be distinctly separated, and that we should no longer attempt to combine the two in the same vessel, as in all the mail steamers which have hitherto ascended the St. Lawrence. I anticipated the time when as a rule only passengers and mails would be carried in ships constructed for speed, and that other ships would be designed for the transportation of freight. Under this arrangement the combination of the two classes of traffic would come to an end; passengers would no longer be carried at less speed than they desire to travel, and freight would be moved across the ocean under conditions which would admit of transport charges being reduced to a minimum. In the one case speed and safety would be the main object, in the other economy in carriage the primary consideration. If we look forward to that time, and there is every indication that it is not far distant, it will be most profitable for steamships of great freight-carrying capacity to proceed up the river St. Lawrence as far as the navigation will admit, but unprofitable for ships specially designed to carry across the ocean mails and passengers only, to proceed so far inland. When we come fully to realize these results, it will easily be seen to be advantageous to limit the length of the voyage of fast trans-Atlantic passenger steamships as much as possible. The president of the Canadian Pacific Railway says that steamships carrying but a small cargo, say 1,500 tons of freight, should not go further west than Quebec; logically it follows that if they carry no freight, the ocean voyage should terminate at some suitable port nearer Liverpool than Quebec.

I do not pretend that on this ground alone the ships of the proposed fast line should terminate their western voyages at some point on the Atlantic sea-board of the Maritime Provinces. Considered however in connection with the well-known difficulties, which operate against fast steaming on the route usually followed by the St. Lawrence, we are forced to enquire into the advantages and disadvantages of terminating the ocean voyage at one of our Atlantic harbours. In investigating this





point six months ago I found that of all the good harbours in the Maritime Provinces, Sydney on the eastern coast of Cape Breton has the advantage of being nearest to Great Britain; it has the disadvantage however of having the character of a summer harbour only, as it is liable to be blocked with ice at the close of winter and in spring. Fortunately Halifax, the next most eastern well-known harbour, is always open and available as a winter port for the Canadian passenger steamships, wherever they may run in summer. In my first paper a number of reasons were submitted in favor of using Halifax as the terminal port all the year round.

Naturally, the conclusion formed by me, that the St. Lawrence route generally is unsuitable for rapid steaming, was not received with satisfaction. I fully share in the disappointment experienced, and gladly welcome a suggestion which if carried into effect would give to the St. Lawrence an ever-increasing proportion of the European passenger business. This suggestion is to combine summer voyages through the placid waters of the Gulf and river, with a short passage across the ocean.

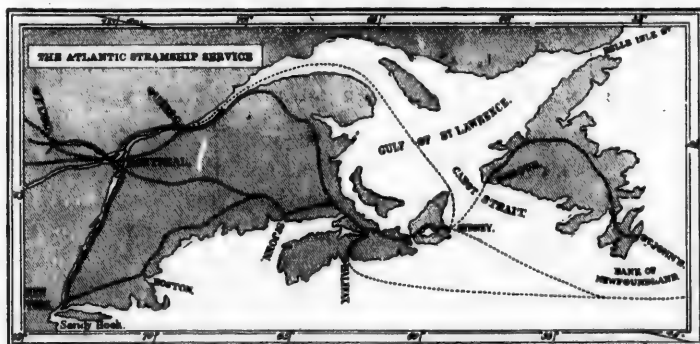
This object may be accomplished in two ways; in both it is proposed to use only the southern entrance to the Gulf.

The first proposal is to run fast steamships between Quebec and Liverpool, and with the view of expediting the mails and accommodating passengers from the Maritime Provinces and Eastern States, to make Sydney a port of call. The steamships to run at full speed between Sydney and Liverpool. Between Quebec and Sydney the speed to be reduced as circumstances may require.

The second proposal is to divide the voyage into two distinct parts, one extending over the ocean proper from Sydney to the most eligible port in Great Britain, the other embracing the River and Gulf; on the former, fast steamships constructed specially for carrying only passengers and mails to be employed, on the latter steamers of less speed than the ocean steamships, and suitable for the navigation of the gulf and river, to be placed on the route. The remarks which follow will refer chiefly to the

second proposal, as on examination it will be found on economic grounds to be entitled to the preference.

With the view of making the proposal clear, I may explain that Sydney is on a well-sheltered inlet of the open Atlantic, directly outside the southern entrance to the Gulf of St. Lawrence. It is conveniently situated for vessels passing between Quebec and Liverpool by the Cabot Straits. The geographical position of Sydney is in other respects important. It is the extreme eastern terminus of the Intercolonial Railway, and with the exception of the channel about a mile wide, known as the Gut of Canso, (now crossed by a steam railway ferry,) Sydney is in unbroken railway connection with Halifax, St. John, Quebec, Montreal, Toronto, and Vancouver. Sydney is in the heart of the Cape Breton coal field: an economic fact which adds immensely to its importance as a port of call for ocean steamships. There are striking circumstances in connection with the relations of Sydney to Newfoundland, which I shall refer to later.



By constituting Sydney a transferring point for passengers on the line between Quebec and Liverpool, we remain in allegiance to the St. Lawrence, while we are enabled to discard that portion of the route to which the greatest objection is taken, that is to say, the navigation through the Straits of Belle Isle. The proposal will admit of placing on the ocean passage proper, the very fastest steamships, without incurring the risks

inseparable from the more northern route. The fact that Sydney is 860 nautical miles nearer Liverpool than New York, itself indicates that with steamships of equal speed the ocean passage can be made to and from Sydney in nearly two days less than to and from New York.

The suggestion to follow the St. Lawrence from Sydney to Quebec, does not involve the necessity of running at any unsafe speed in the gulf or river St. Lawrence. As the mails can be conveyed to and from Sydney by railway much faster than by water, passengers only would go by the river and gulf, and there would be no pressure from the Post-Office Department to accelerate the movement of the river steamers. The one object of the captain in command would be the safety and comfort of his passengers.

These steamers, meeting at Sydney, would during the summer months constitute a passenger line of the highest class between Quebec and Liverpool. At the end of the season the river steamers would be laid up and the ocean steamships would extend their voyages to Halifax. On the opening of navigation in each new season and the disappearance of ice on the route to Sydney, the fast steamships would be withdrawn from the Halifax route and placed on the Sydney route. In the first part of the summer it would be expedient for them to follow a southern course across the banks of Newfoundland, as the New York ships do, in order to keep at a safe distance from ice-bergs and obviate all chance of delay.

I will say here but little respecting the terminal port in Great Britain, as that question chiefly concerns our fellow-subjects on the other side of the Atlantic. The suggestion in my former paper to make the termination of the ocean voyage proper at Loch Ryan, although regarded in some quarters as an interference with present practices has generally been received with favour. There is however a strong feeling that the long-established terminal port of Liverpool will continue to be the point where passengers will prefer to land and embark. The future may modify these views, provided among other things that the natural advantages of Loch Ryan be developed by local enterprise. Meanwhile there is nothing to prevent the Canadian line

of steamships making Liverpool the final terminal port, even if they call at Loch Ryan to land and receive mails. The chief reasons for suggesting Loch Ryan were, in the first place, that it is the nearest harbour in Great Britain to Canada, and that it is a point for the collection and distribution of the trans-Atlantic mail matter of the three kingdoms, more centrally situated than any other port. On the arrival of a steamship at Loch Ryan on the one side of the Atlantic, or at Sydney on the other, in both instances the ocean passage would practically be completed. The mails would be transferred to the railways at both points, and passengers remaining on board would be carried forward towards their destination. Of course passengers with a press of business would have it in their power to disembark with the mails and proceed to their destination by land more speedily than by water.

The distance from Sydney to Loch Ryan is under 2,160 miles, so that the Atlantic passage could be made by a 20-knot steamer in four and a half days, by a 22-knot steamer in about four days. The fastest ocean steaming on the New York route has been that of the "Lucania," which made an average speed throughout the passage of 22.01 knots. On the passage to and from Sydney there would be not far short of two days' less consecutive steaming than on the New York route and to that extent therefore the strain on the machinery would be diminished. It is reasonable to suppose that the "Lucania" or a vessel of her speed could easily cross the ocean from port to port, on the proposed Canadian route, in four days.

In making a comparison between routes, it is necessary to bear in mind that the reported passages, from New York to Liverpool, are misleading. The passage is reckoned from Sandy Hook Light Ship to Daunt's Rock. The former is outside New York harbour, and if tide and weather be favourable it may be reached from New York in two hours, but under unfavourable conditions it may take twelve hours or more. On the other side of the Atlantic, "Daunt's Rock" is 228 miles from the bar at the entrance of Liverpool harbour. These facts go to show that it is impossible to accept the time given in the press reports as the

actual time required to make the passage from land to land. One may make a just comparison between the proposed mail route *via* Sydney and the route *via* New York, if we take a common point in Canada such as Montreal, and a common point in England such as London—reckoning equal steamship speed in both cases and making all reasonable allowances for delays.

*Via* NEW YORK.

Montreal to New York, <i>Railway</i> .....	15 hours.
Average delay in New York, say .....	10 hours.*
New York to Sandy Hook, say .....	2 hours.*
Sandy Hook to Liverpool Bar, 3036 miles at 20 knots.....	152 hours.
Delay between Bar and <i>Railway</i> , Liverpool.....	3 hours.
Liverpool to London, <i>Railway</i> .....	4 hours.
	<hr/> 186 hours.

Equals 7 days 18 hours from Montreal to London.

*Via* SYDNEY.

Montreal to Sydney, <i>Railway</i> , 898 miles.....	30 hours.
Delay at Sydney .....	2 hours.
Sydney to Loch Ryan, 2160 miles .....	108 hours.
Delay at Loch Ryan .....	2 hours.
Loch Ryan to London, <i>Railway</i> .....	8 hours.
	<hr/> 150 hours.

Equals 6 days 6 hours from Montreal to London.

This comparison brings out very clearly that the proposed route *via* Sydney would be an excellent mail route, as according to the above, letters could be carried between Montreal and London, on an average, in 36 hours less than *via* New York.

The returns for 1896 give evidence of the exceedingly large proportions attained by the trans-Atlantic passenger business. They attest however that the traffic has become concentrated to a wonderful extent at the Port of New York. The total numbers of arrivals and departures are as follows :—

\*As large vessels cannot pass the entrance bar except at high tide, the hour of sailing from New York is variable. If the hour for sailing comes before the arrival of the Montreal trains, mails and passengers require to leave Montreal two days before the steamship leaves New York. The detention in New York ranges from 1 to 24 hours. After sailing, there are causes of delay before Sandy Hook is reached. I may furnish an instance which came under my own experience:—The "Alaska" sailed at 8 a.m., October 17th, 1882, but owing to low tide and fog she did not pass the bar in the tortuous entrance until 11 a.m. on the 19th. Montreal mails and passengers on board had to spend 3 days, 19 hours on the journey before they reached Sandy Hook to begin the voyage proper.

## WESTBOUND PASSENGERS.

ARRIVED.	CABIN.	2ND CABIN.	STEERAGE.
At New York ....	55,034	45,591	251,779
" Canadian Ports	4,625	4,732	16,816
" All other ports*	2,034	5,381	47,273
Totals .....	61,693	55,704	315,868

## EASTBOUND PASSENGERS.

DEPARTED.	CABIN.	2ND CABIN.	STEERAGE.
From New York ..	55,642	36,999	109,520
" Canadian Ports	3,924	3,166	4,571
" All other Ports*	2,093	4,566	13,452
Totals .....	61,659	44,731	127,543

The number of passengers who have arrived at and sailed from New York during the past year is indeed remarkable. We know that a very large proportion of Canadian travel has taken that direction. Persons from Canada have been attracted, as others have been attracted, by the superiority of the trans-Atlantic steamship service. This is not the only reason, but it is one of the influences that cause so many to prefer the New York route. Owing largely to British capital and enterprise, the fastest and best steamships run to and from that city, and they have aided in no small degree to build up the passenger business so generally turned in that direction. As a rule, passengers have a way of seeking out the ships which cross the ocean in the shortest time. This rule is not confined to cabin passengers, it extends equally to steerage passengers. Those engaged in the business inform me that in their choice of a ship, passengers of every class are, as a rule, governed not so much by the passage money charged as by the speed of the vessel. Experience goes to show that even steerage passengers will pay more to travel by a fast steamship than by one of moderate speed, and that lines with no reputation for crossing the ocean quickly are avoided. These facts are well established, and it has been found that the steamships of greatest speed placed on the New York route divert the traffic, not only from other ports in the United States and in Canada, but they

\*From Boston, Baltimore, Philadelphia, New Orleans and Galveston.

also attract passengers from other vessels of less speed, running to and from New York. Do we not see in this circumstance an explanation for the disproportionately small number of passengers travelling by way of the St. Lawrence? Does it not make it apparent that a greatly improved service such as I have outlined would tend to make the Canadian route preferred by every class of passengers? If by way of a Canadian port we bring Montreal 36 hours nearer London than by way of New York, if we reduce the ocean voyage between the Dominion and a port in the heart of the British Isles to four days, would we not in effect place ourselves much nearer the mother country than ever before? Would we not open a new and wider door for a stream of welcome immigrants?

There are grounds for the belief that an improved railway service, such as we find elsewhere, would enable New York passengers to participate in the advantages of the Canadian short ocean passage by way of Sydney. No doubt the long land journey from New York to Sydney would be objected to by a large number, but after all the distance is much the same as that between Chicago and New York, a journey with ease performed daily by hundreds. It is not unreasonable to think that the land journey from New York to Sydney would not deter those from undertaking it who desire to travel by the steamships which would most speedily make the ocean voyage. The number of trans-Atlantic passengers of all classes, to and from New York gives a weekly average throughout the year of 6,777 westbound, and 3,888 eastbound. It may be assumed that a moderate percentage of these passengers, if the railway service was brought up to a good standard, would prefer the Sydney route, and it would require but a small percentage of the whole number to fill up one weekly steamer.

It always exacts time to establish a new route unless there be much to recommend it. In this case the geographical features of the Dominion in relation to Europe extend to the proposed new Canadian route advantages, which give it an exceedingly commanding position. Compared with the New York route it may claim as follows:

1. That the ocean passage would be nearly two days shorter.

2. That fewer steamships would be required to perform the regular weekly service.

3. That the consumption of coal on each voyage would be about one third less, and moreover the coal used would be obtained almost at the pit's mouth.

4. All other expenses of the voyage would be proportionately reduced.

In view of these advantages and the yearly increasing development of trans-Atlantic passenger traffic, it does not seem an unreasonable conclusion, that once fairly established the route *via* Sydney would prove successful, and that in course of years the number of steamers would require to be multiplied so that this route would partake of the character of a Canadian Ferry. Trans-Atlantic passenger traffic increases at a rapid rate, and every new facility promotes its increase. Beginning with a weekly line, on a route which narrows the Atlantic to the shortest compass, as time goes on and further improvements in ship-building are introduced, more frequent sailings would be demanded. Firmly impressed with these views, I see nothing to prevent the new Canadian route resulting eventually in a daily ferry connecting the two continents.

Not the least important consideration in connection with the establishment of the route *via* Sydney is the bearing which it has on the oldest British colony. Sydney is not far distant from Newfoundland. The railway through that island is nearly completed and will be in operation from St. John's to Port Aux Basque by July or August next. A first-class steel ferry steamer is at present being constructed on the Clyde, to ply between Port Aux Basque and Sydney. In a few months, the railway and steam ferry will be opened for traffic between St. John's and Sydney. It is easy to be seen that the establishment of the Canadian steamship line, *via* Sydney, as proposed, would give to Newfoundland direct connection with our mail services to Quebec on the one hand and to Liverpool on the other. It would bring the colony, with the assistance of the public works established through her own enterprise, within the sphere of all our great lines of communication. The improved means of intercourse could not fail to bring about results of the first importance, equally to Newfoundland and the Dominion,

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